

BEYOND BARRIERS

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2

SIKESTON REGIONAL CENTER

SUMMER 2003

Living Beyond Limitations!!

Try to imagine how difficult it might be to complete high school in three years, rather than four, with a 3.965 grade point average. Now try to imagine accomplishing that feat after spending almost your entire sophomore year in hospitals trying to recover from a near-fatal car accident. Better yet, try to imagine overcoming extraordinary obstacles and then receiving scholarships that will pay your entire college tuition. Travis Elfrink doesn't have to imagine it because it is his reality!

Although September 29th, 2000 may have been a normal day for most people, it is a day that will never escape the memories of Travis Elfrink and his family. The day did begin normally for Travis. He drove himself to school, went to his classes, had fun with his friends during the school day, and came home for supper. That evening Travis went out cruising around with friends and before midnight, Travis' life would take a dramatic turn for the worse. Travis became the victim of a one-vehicle accident that left him with quadriplegia. There were no drugs or alcohol involved in the accident and the police stated that Travis was not driving recklessly. Travis admits that he was injured because he was an inexperienced driver and was thrown from the vehicle during the accident because he did not have his seat belt on.

Travis was air-lifted from the crash site to a local hospital in Cape Girardeau. He was unaware that he could not feel his legs, that both lungs were severely bruised, and that his spinal cord had been stretched, compressed, and severely bruised. Travis' spinal cord lost blood, nutrients, and oxygen supply. Three surgeries over three days stabilized Travis' spinal column, but Travis was on a ventilator, got pneumonia, and suffered from a bleeding ulcer. Travis' weight dropped from 165 to 119 in just a few short weeks and he received a stomach tube for feeding. Because of a lack of progress with his medical condition, Travis was transferred to St. Louis Children's Hospital the day before Thanksgiving in 2000. Travis remained in St. Louis until he had made enough progress to return to his home in Marble Hill on July 15th, 2001.

Until September 29th, 2000 Travis had never missed one day of school in his entire academic career and had maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average. Not only was Travis academically superior, but he would more than likely have been a starting player on the Woodland high school varsity basketball team. Travis had never missed one practice. Travis'

strong will and determination allowed him to graduate on time with the class of 2003. Because of his accomplishments in the classroom and out of the classroom, Travis was awarded several scholarships that will help him with another landmark accomplishment...graduating from college!

The most notable scholarship that Travis earned is the AXA Achievement Scholarship. The AXA Achievement

program recognizes students who have excellent grades and have also achieved excellence outside the classroom. One high school graduate from each state, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. receives a \$10,000.00 scholarship and only ten out of those 52 winners will win an additional \$15,000.00 scholarship. Travis won the state level scholarship and the national level scholarship which equals \$25,000.00 in scholarship funding. Because of this accomplishment,

Travis was credited with this win in the May 5th, 2003 edition of U.S. News & World Report. Travis is quoted in the magazine as saying, "I'm extremely determined. I'm going to get out of this wheelchair."

In addition to earning the AXA Achievement Scholarship, Travis also earned the Prevallet-Porter scholarship for \$1,268.00 that is specifically for someone with a disability. He also earned a \$598.00 Black River Electric scholarship and the John Chester and Lillian Allen scholarship for \$3,000.00. These scholarships will definitely be of assistance to Travis while he achieves his goal of excelling and graduating at the college level. Combined, the scholarship amounts total just under \$30,000.00.

Travis will start college at Southeast Missouri State University on August 25th, 2003. He is still trying to choose between two different majors. Travis would like to be either an engineer or a lawyer, and that may change over time, too. His first semester at Southeast, Travis will be taking a Pre-engineering class, College Algebra, English Composition, and this writer's favorite, Critical Thinking: The Study of ESP, Bigfoot, and UFO's.

Travis has obviously had his hardships and his successes, but he is a young man with much resolve. His determination to accomplish what may seem to be the impossible is nothing short of outstanding. We'll need to keep an eye on this young man, not only to see what he accomplishes academically, but to be there when he does get out of that wheelchair! --Bryan Noack, Service Coordinator





Resources for Parents of Wandering Children



Prevention and Warning Devices can bring peace of mind to parents whose children tend to take off without a moment's notice and without any awareness of danger.

When you're out in the community, the answer may be **Child Guard**, which is a receiver and transmitter. The transmitter is hidden in a plastic toy that the child can wear or carry. The parent keeps the transmitter, which has a rotating dial that can be adjusted anywhere between 6 and 30 feet. If the child gets out of range, the receiver starts to beep. To order, call 877-450-KIDS. Cost is currently \$19.99. www.safetymax.com Scroll down and click on "Child Monitoring System." Also, check out the "Child Guardian Safety System."

Care Trak offers tracking devices that alarm parents if a child moves out of an area they determine and also can locate a missing child up to a mile away, day or night, inside or outside. You can determine the direction your child has gone within moments of hearing the alarm. These devices are costly, over \$1,000.00, but you can try a system free for 14 days. SRC has a video and more information about Care Trak, or call 800-842-4537 or visit their web site at www.caretrak.com

Whereify is a locator for children. This new product uses the U.S. government's Global Positioning System (GPS) and the digital nationwide PCS wireless network to pinpoint the location of the person wearing the "cool for kids" locator bracelet. The cost is \$399.99, plus a monthly charge similar to a cell phone charge. Monthly charges range from \$24.95 to \$34.95. Requirements include a telephone and a computer with Internet. Read about additional features on the website at www.locate1.com/prod_watches.htm or www.whereifylocator.com

Wrist Talker Actually a toy, the slightest push on the face of this wrist communicator will provide recorded messages of up to 10 seconds. Great sound quality will enable the user to communicate any greeting. Easy to record and re-record. If a child who doesn't speak gets lost at a mall or other public area, his recorded message can be played. Currently on home page of site, www.enablingdevices.com

Radio Shack sells a **motion detector** for your home that can be placed at the end of a hallway or near a door to let you know when there is movement in that area. The device makes a ding-dong sound when it is activated. Cost is \$19.99 and Radio Shack says it has been very reliable.

Also available at Radio Shack is a 24-hour door/window **electronic alarm** which is key operated, has an on/off switch and does not need wiring. It requires a 9V alkaline battery. It is very effective for additional protection for nighttime use. Installation is easy and cost is \$14.99 each.

Wheelchair Workshops

Participants in four recent wheelchair workshops learned how to keep their wheelchairs in tip-top condition. The curriculum included how to take the wheelchairs apart, as well as how and when to clean, lubricate, tighten bolts, and make minor adjustments for comfort and ease of operation. Tom Berkbigler, a physical therapist at Kenny Rogers Children's Center in Sikeston, conducted the workshops which were co-sponsored by Sikeston Regional Center, Kenny Rogers Children's Center, and the Region IX Council on developmental disabilities.



Tom Berkbigler explains some basics of wheelchair maintenance to Joyce Horky of Parkview State School in Cape Girardeau, and student, Kevin Spengler, of Murray, KY.

Brighter Tomorrow Grants for People with MS

Each year the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation makes dreams come true for individuals with multiple sclerosis across the country by providing goods or services (valued at up to \$1000.00 per recipient) that improve their quality of life. *Recipients of Brighter Tomorrow* grants have received car repairs, ramps, wheelchairs, walkers, eyeglasses, computers, appliances, televisions, furniture, therapeutic equipment, hobby supplies, retreats, and various home modifications. To qualify, a person must be 18 years of age or older and diagnosed with MS, or the parent of a minor child diagnosed with MS, and be a permanent U.S. resident. They must not have any other means of fulfilling the need they express. Learn more at www.msfacts.org (click on "Programs") or call 1-888-MSFOCAS.

HIPAA - And So We Begin

Have you been getting lots of "privacy notices" in the mail lately? They come from banks, loan companies, and credit card corporations. Have you been asked to sign a document or list when you picked up medication from the pharmacy? Have you noticed receptionists covering up appointment books at the doctor's office? There is a reason for all this additional privacy protection...it's called HIPAA!

For anyone who has not heard of HIPAA, the letters stand for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This is a federal law that was passed in 1996 and has three (3) sections, Transactions (billing), Privacy, and Security, that agencies have just started to be compliant with.

Our concern is mostly about the HIPAA section on Privacy, so I will mention a few things that persons/consumers will see or hear about from the Regional Center in this area.

If you have not already seen or received a copy of Department of Mental Health's Privacy Practices under HIPAA, then your Service Coordinator will be giving this to you and going over it sometime this year, possibly when your Personal Plan is due. Our Privacy Practices will tell you how we may or may not use any Protected Health Information (PHI) that we have about consumers. The Privacy Practices also tell you what your rights are regarding Medical/Health information that we have about you.

These rights are:

- ❖ You have the right to inspect and copy your medical/health information.
- ❖ You have the right to request an amendment to your medical/health information if you feel it is incorrect or incomplete.
- ❖ You have the right to request an accounting of the disclosures made by our facility of your medical/health information.
- ❖ You have the right to request restrictions on how we may use or disclose your medical/health information.
- ❖ You have the right to request confidential communication about medical/health matters in a certain way.
- ❖ You have the right to receive a paper copy of our Privacy Practices.

If you have any questions concerning your rights under HIPAA, then you may contact the HIPAA Privacy Officer at the Regional Center by calling 573-472-5300. *-Dennis Hahn, Privacy Officer*

Remember the Bicycle?

While traveling around the country doing presentations, I've been amazed (and dismayed) to learn how many children and adults with disabilities don't have the tools they need for success (assistive technology devices). For a variety of reasons, professionals, parents, therapists, and others who have great influence over the lives of children and adults with disabilities say things like, "Well, Johnny isn't able to use a power wheelchair, communication device, or whatever." In too many cases, however, the person with a disability has never been given the opportunity to try the device! Those around him *presume incompetence*. Other times, we give a person one brief opportunity to try out a new device (or accommodation), and if the person doesn't "get it" immediately, we assume she's incapable of benefiting from it. We don't consider that she might need more time or a different device. The "bicycle story," however, enables many to gain new perspective.



When your parents bought your first bicycle, did you know how to ride it? In most cases, the answer is NO! But they bought it for you anyway, with no guarantee you would be successful at mastering the two-wheeler. They presumed competence!

As adults, we buy computers and other tools before we know how to use them. We presume competence in ourselves. How would it feel, though, if a salesperson gave you the once-over and said he will not sell you a computer because he doesn't think you'd ever learn how to use it? When thinking about what tools and accommodations would enable a person with a disability to achieve success, remember the bicycle, and presume competence!

(This article is reprinted by permission from "Revolutionary Common Sense" newsletter, June 2001 issue. Kathie Snow is also the author of "People First Language." To read other articles by Kathie, learn more about people first language, or find out about her book, Disability is Natural, visit www.disabilityvisnatural.com

*Not to know is bad, not
to wish to know is worse.
--Nigerian Proverb*

Quilters Donate Blankets



Members of the Bootheel Quilters' Guild display some of their blankets.

Sikeston Regional Center recently received 16 weighted blankets, donated by the Bootheel Quilters' Guild. The blankets are the result of the quilters' annual community project, and will be distributed to area families with a child who can benefit from deep pressure therapy. If you know someone who could use one of these blankets, contact their service coordinator at the regional center.

Creative Solutions



Cooking Spray, like PAM, is also an effective lubricant. According to a recent article in *Readers Digest*, a quick spritz can:

- prevent dirt from caking onto garden tools
- help stop cat litter from clinging to the box
- keep dead bugs from adhering to your car bumper
- loosen a sticky lock
- remove stickers from glass and plastic.

Make your own Wipes

Cut a roll of paper towels in half so there are two short rolls (preferably Brawny or Bounty Select-A-Size.) Remove cardboard centers and place in a container that can be tightly sealed. Mix 2 cups water, 1 teaspoon baby bath, and 1 teaspoon baby oil. Pour over paper towels in container and roll towels to absorb. Seal well between uses.

Peanut Butter Play Dough

In a large bowl, mix 1 cup oatmeal and 1 Cup non-fat powdered milk. Add ½ cup honey and 1 cup peanut butter and mix together until it forms one large ball. Store in airtight container and refrigerate.

Inexpensive simple push Switch

Tip from a mom in Texas: Adam loves electric toys and computer games. He has severe CP and needs a simple push switch to activate a battery interrupter or make a mouse "click" on the computer. Radio Shack has a switch made for stenographers to start and stop a tape recorder. It has a mini end on it, so you may have to buy a 1/8 inch adapter there as well. You will have an indestructible switch for about \$6, compared to \$50+ from a special needs company.

Tips from Special Child

(for more tips, go to www.specialchild.com and click on "Tips.")

From Texas: When my son outgrew his crib, we bought him a captain's style twin bed and built a side rail out of wood that hinges to the bed side and latches in an upright position with gate latches. The extra height of the bed makes lifting to and from his wheelchair less back-breaking, and the railing makes him safe from rolling out of bed. Bolster pillows work great to keep him from banging on the wall or rail.

From Colorado: My daughter's wheelchair is black and so it can get very hot. We wanted some sort of shade for it, but did not want the price tag that would come with it. We found a simple solution. At Toys R Us, we found an umbrella shade for umbrella strollers for only \$10.00. It clamps on and has a moveable arm. The other great thing is that it looks so cute, not like something from an institution. We have gotten so many comments on her beautiful "pink parasol".

From Canada: At around age 5, our daughter with Down syndrome wanted to drink from a cup using a straw - just like all the other kids do. She could not understand the concept of "sucking" on the straw. By accident, after many attempts, we told her to "kiss" the straw. This produced the "sucking" motion, and she caught on from that point forward. Now she loves to drink from drinking boxes.

From Oklahoma: An alternative for large adult-size bibs is to get a length of ribbon and sew alligator clips onto both ends. That way, you can use anything as a bib; just hang the ribbon on the person's neck and clip it to a towel, napkin, placemat, etc., even restaurant paper napkins in an emergency

Baptist Youth Build Ramps



Ten-year-old Thomas "Mitch" Wood grins shyly as he shows off his family's brand new wheelchair ramp, then adds that he wants to thank everyone involved very, very much! Those thanks go to the World Changers Youth Mission Group, sponsored by the Cape Area Baptist Association. Young volunteers arrived in Cape Girardeau to build several wheelchair ramps in Cape Girardeau, Perryville, and Scott City the first week of July. Materials were donated by the association. Mitch's mom, Angela, says ten Baptist teens and two adult carpenters showed up at 9:00 am with the materials, and when they left at 5:00 p.m., the ramp was finished!

Mitch enjoyed watching the work progress as he visited with the group about their favorite video games and movies! Kudos to the Baptist teens!

PARENT TO PARENT

We once wanted to replace our kitchen cabinets because they were dark and outdated. We wanted white kitchen cabinets. We quickly realized replacing the old cabinets with new cabinets would be very costly. In order to get what we wanted, we had to think again, or think outside the box. We substituted buying new cabinets by painting our old cabinets white. They look just as good as new cabinets, but without the huge cost.

There are many ways we substitute things. We have substitute teachers and substitute sweeteners. Anything that you use to replace something else is substituting. We most likely do it everyday and don't even realize it. When it comes to our children and trying to meet their specialized needs, we all can be creative in substituting. We, as parents, may not always have every resource necessary for our children, but if we think outside the box, and get creative, I'm sure we can find a great substitute.

-- Cindy Brotherton,
Parent Policy Partner



TECH TIME

Accessibility Solutions on the Web

Microsoft website for Accessibility to Technology: <http://microsoft.com/enable>

Learn about built-in accessibility features in Microsoft products that you can adjust to meet your needs and preferences. Learn about Product Resources, Assistive Technology, Step by Step Tutorials, Guides by Disability, Business Benefits, Articles & Events.

Learn the Net: Internet for Beginners <http://www.learnthenet.com>. Learn the Net provides free comprehensive, user-friendly Internet training. Learn to master the basics, surf the web, find information, download files, conference, build a website, send and receive email, and protect yourself.

Ability Hub: <http://www.abilityhub.com>

Assistive Technology for people with a disability who find operating a computer difficult, maybe even impossible. This web site will direct you to adaptive equipment and alternative methods available for accessing computers

Virtual Technology Center: <http://www.at-center.com>

This site includes links for freeware and shareware.

Closing the Gap: <http://www.closingthegap.com>

Dedicated to computer technology in special education and rehabilitation. Includes product descriptions, product recommendations and a resource directory

AssisTech, Inc. www.assisttech.com is a small, customer-friendly company offering keyguards to enhance computer access by users of all ages and light-tech adaptive mobility solutions for youngsters.

*"There is no excuse for not providing services to (special needs) students.
We shouldn't be forced under the threat of a suit to do the right thing.
There's no excuse for not serving kids."*

*- Dr. Henry Johnson
Mississippi Superintendent of Education*

Regional Round-Up



Brain Injury Seminar for Survivors and Families, Sat., Aug. 16, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Harrison Room at Southeast Missouri Hospital. Registration by August 8th is \$10 per person, or pay \$15 at the door (Registration fee includes lunch.) This seminar is sponsored by the Brain Injury Assoc. of Mo., and Southeast Mo. Hospital. Learn about wills; trusts and Special Needs Trusts; how to be productive, even with TBI; how to keep relationships together; how to keep the financial boat afloat; and about Ticket to Work and Return to Work incentives. For more information, call the Generations Center at (573) 651-5825.

Advocate for Your Child...Wrightslaw Advocacy Bootcamp for Parents and Professionals, Aug. 25 & 26, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Heartspring Conference Center, Wichita, Kansas. This is an intensive and personalized training with ample opportunities to network. For fee and other information, call (316) 634-8792 or visit www.heartspring.org.

Assistive Technology Consumer Fair, FREE, September 20, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., America's Center – Convention Center Downtown, 701 Convention Plaza Dr., St. Louis. Ride the Metro Link to the Convention Center Stop...or park at 4444 Forest Park Pkwy and ride the accessible shuttle. For more information, call Carla Walker at 314-725-6676, ext. 101 (voice) or 314-725-6811 (TTY) or visit <http://enablemob.wustl.edu>

Dysfunction of Sensory Integration (DSI) is the inability of the brain to correctly process information brought in by the senses. A parent support group meets monthly the 2nd Saturday of the month from 2-4 p.m. at the Benton United Methodist Church (basement). For an informational flyer, and to learn more about this group, call Chris at (573)262-3948. Connecting with other parents and sharing resources is a wonderful way to get support and information!





NEWS YOU CAN USE

--Candy Lane, Community Resource Coordinator

Healing Magazine is a FREE quarterly publication offered by KidsPeace to human service professionals, educators, parents, and students. Learn about new parenting strategies and techniques for intervention and conflict resolution. Write to KidsPeace Fulfillment Department, 1650 Broadway, Bethlehem, PA 18015, or click www.KidsPeace.org. (**KidsPeace** is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping children in crisis.)

Daycare: Need help finding a day care for your child with special needs? Contact Leisa at Child Care Resource & Referral, 573-290-5590 or 800-811-1127, ext. 2.

Door Opener: The Door Butler Operator is a simple and inexpensive, non-electric option for people who use walkers or wheelchairs or have mobility issues. Works best on out-swinging doors. Read more about it at <http://www.doorbutler.com/brochure>, or write to R. A. Products Company, Inc. and Door Butler, P.O. Box 147005 Denver, CO 80214-7005 or call toll free 877-338-4464.

ICanGo® Mobility Kit converts a battery-run ride-in toy vehicle from standard foot-pedal operation to work with any adaptive switch. Choose a switch and an off-the-shelf toy vehicle. Attach the kit to the vehicle to adapt it from foot pedal to switch operation. In less than an hour, youngsters can be driving their favorite car! www.assisttech.com

Toys "R" Us Toy Guide for Differently Abled Kids: Call 1-800-TOYSRUS to get a free catalog, or shop online at www.toysrus.com/differentlyabled.

The American Association of People with Disabilities is the largest national nonprofit cross-disability member organization in the United States, dedicated to ensuring economic self-sufficiency and political empowerment for Americans with disabilities. AAPD works in coalition with other disability organizations for the full implementation and enforcement of disability nondiscrimination laws, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Learn about Internship Programs for college students with disabilities, look over the Resource Guide, etc. at www.aapd-dc.org.

New MPACT Coordinator

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Janis Traughber, and I am the Southeast Region Coordinator for MPACT (Missouri Parents ACT). My region includes twenty counties. All of the Coordinators of MPACT are parents of a child with a disability, so they have **been-there done-that**. I live in Poplar Bluff with my husband, Jim, and our sixteen year old twins, Joseph and Jessica. I was fortunate to have been introduced to MPACT when my children were in the Early Childhood Program. I immediately began attending trainings, became a volunteer, and have continued to access MPACT resources. We have presently made it to the 10th grade, yeah!

MPACT helps families across Missouri in advocacy training, and as an information center to serve children with disabilities, their families, and communities. MPACT offers many benefits to parents. The free trainings assist them in understanding the special education law, supports parents by going with them as they talk with the school, provides resources, assists with transition issues (school to work), helps parents become a part of a parent network, and much more.

The free training and support that MPACT offers is an invaluable tool in helping parents understand IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and the educational process. MPACT is always looking for volunteers to complete a series of trainings and become a part of our newly revised Mentor Program. What a wonderful opportunity to give back to the family of a child with special needs. Please contact me for more information regarding this.

I am available for trainings, workshops, and as a speaker for meetings. I enjoy meeting new people and networking. If your agency or support group would be interested in more information, please call or email me. We are already working on Back to School Fairs for the fall. Feel free to forward my name and information to parents that would benefit from the many resources MPACT has to offer.

Janis Traughber, SE Region Coordinator,
1341 Meadow Lane, Poplar Bluff, MO 63901
573-686-8493 - 1-877-876-2831 or email
jtraughber@ptimpact.com. Don't forget to visit our web site at www.ptimpact.com for lots of great information.

Just for KIDS!

TEEN CENTRAL Totally **ANONYMOUS**...Totally **COOL**!! Teen Central was created by **KidsPeace** and teens like you! This is a "password-protected safe cyber-space for teens to work out their issues." Share your experience. Find out "whassup" with people you can relate to. This help-line web site is **for** teens, **by** teens. Looking for new options, new ideas, new friends? Got a story to tell, a wrong to right, a problem to sort out? Check out the **best teen site on the Internet** (according to Yahoo!) www.teencentral.net

Combine Fun and Learning! Link up to all the homework help websites! Get tips that will help you in school! Practice the SAT! **GUARANTEED...kids of all ages** will LOVE this website!! Check it out at www.homeworksnof.com

Thinking Outside the Box

Caleb Revell is very lucky to have such a loving and caring family supporting him. When we met Caleb's grandmother, Rose May, she shared her story with us and told us how Caleb's Uncle Billy had changed the way Caleb's family cares for him. It didn't take us long to realize we needed to meet Billy for ourselves!

Billy May says he is "just a carpenter", but after only 10 minutes, we knew he was much more! We'd also call him an all around craftsman, an engineer, a master of creativity, an inventor, and an enthusiastic entrepreneur.

Billy was concerned about his parents, who both have health problems. When he realized that Caleb, who is 15 years old, was getting too heavy for his parents to lift, he knew something had to be done. It didn't take him long to come up with a solution. He had picked up a discarded track used for a hand slide from a children's fun center that was going out of business. Billy figured it would be "just the ticket" for a ceiling track system to help move Caleb from his bedroom to the living room. In one day, he installed the track, bolting it to studs and all the way through the wall at the ends. He added an electric winch, and attached the top of Caleb's Hoyer lift and his sling. For an investment of only \$150.00, Caleb's grandparents can now raise him from his bed, motor him into the living room, and lower him onto his favorite spot, his very own platform! No lifting is required!



Billy has also completely wired and installed a donated lift into his parents' van, modified his parents' home to make it wheelchair accessible, and built Caleb's platform. His next project is to install a tub that will swing out from the wall and under the track in Caleb's bedroom so that Caleb can be lowered right into the tub. After bathing, the tub will swing back to the wall and out of the way.

Billy helped an elderly friend by installing a wireless doorbell onto his bedrail and another to his wrist with a Velcro band. Now, if the gentleman needs a family member, all he needs to do is push the button on his arm or on the bed and a chime will alert the family. He has also built a shower chair using PVC pipe, lowered cabinets, and widened doorways. He

has a knack for looking at a need and finding a creative way to meet it. "Some people learn from books; some people are hands-on learners - that's me," says Billy.

Billy muses that his nature is to understand how things work and file it away in his knowledge base. That knowledge base, and his inventive spirit, provide Billy with creative inspiration when he ponders a technical problem. Billy definitely "thinks outside the box." "I was born to invent," says Billy. "It's what I love to do!"

Billy says he is always willing to consult with families. Got a challenge that needs a creative suggestion? Call Billy May at (573)335-7976. -- Cindy Brotherton & Candy Lane

BACK TO SCHOOL!!!

Back to School Helpful Hints:

- ✓ Be friendly. When picking up or dropping off your child from school, go into the building and greet teachers, secretaries, and principals.
- ✓ Volunteer at school. Help with PTO or just ask your child's teacher how you can help.
- ✓ Call the school or district office and learn more about committees and volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ Make plans to meet with your child's new teacher a few weeks before school starts.
- ✓ Bring refreshments to your child's IEP meeting.
- ✓ Periodically send appreciation cards to those who work with your child.



For Teachers – School as a Caring Community – Inclusion Handbook and Resources: www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/intro.htm

Teachers seeking success with inclusion will find help and inspiration here. Pass this information on to your child's regular classroom teacher.

Success in School Equals Success in Life: Did you know that family participation in education is twice as influential on learning as socioeconomic status? A new website answers parents' questions on interacting with local schools and encourages them to get involved in their children's education. www.schoolsuccessinfo.org

IDEANews: Keep abreast of the latest news on IDEA! www.ideaactivities.org/ideanews.

Informative Parent Briefs and other briefs on a variety of education topics are available free at <http://ncset.org/publications>

Homework help! Visit www.homeworkspot.com. Link up to all the homework help websites! Get tips that will help you in school! Practice the SAT!



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Changes – The “Stuff” of Life

This issue focuses on flexibility, creativity, and innovation. There are a number of examples found in these articles where innovative folks have found other ways to do things that improve quality of life, make things easier, or just plain make good sense.

Recent budget deficits have brought major changes to the Division of MRDD that impact our organizational make-up, and hopefully, maintain service delivery with minimal disruption to the people we support.

In March of this year, administrative functions of six regional centers were consolidated into three. Albany and Kansas City Regional Centers consolidated management teams, as did Hannibal and Kirksville Regional Centers, and Sikeston and Poplar Bluff Regional Centers. In October, the management consolidation will occur at Springfield/Joplin and Central (Columbia)/Rolla. It is important to understand that all eleven regional centers (including St. Louis) still serve their respective geographic areas, and still have their unique Regional Advisory Councils. The intent of our Division Director, Dr. Anne Deaton, has been to avoid, as much as possible, reductions in services that would have negative effects for families, yet to retain local access to case management. All the forces of flexibility, creativity, and innovation must come together as we are required to do more with less to meet consumer needs.

Case managers (service coordinators) have awesome responsibility not only to advocate for the people they support, but to link them with necessary supports and ensure the quality of those supports. In the present fiscal environment, case management and quality assurance are critical functions of regional centers. Dr. Deaton, and others, have clearly recognized the “must have” components of our system and have made very difficult decisions accordingly.

On a personal level, I have, since March, served in the capacity of Regional Center Director for both Sikeston and Poplar Bluff Regions. We were better prepared for the consolidation, because for several years the two centers, as well as Southeast Missouri Residential Services, have shared a number of administrative functions. I must tell you though,

that the teamwork and attitude of all staff has been remarkable and has made my transition the best it could possibly be..

I am particularly grateful for those who work closest to me every day. Carol Hess, Fiscal and Administrative officer for all three facilities, has paved the way with incredible organization and sensitivity to client and staff need. Dennis Hahn, Mental Health Manager with Sikeston and Poplar Bluff centers, has many years of experience in this field. He is an efficiency expert and “thinks in forms” to streamline every imaginable job component. He is a rock. Terry Regenold and Julie Tharp, Case Management supervisors at the two facilities are WONDERFUL at prompt follow-up, and both are quick to volunteer to relieve me of all manner of things related to client issues. Royce Kessel and Joyce Ellis who chair the Utilization Review Committees assume huge roles and attend to a myriad of details on my behalf. Quality Assurance Team leaders Jim Ferrell and Craig Barwick work with providers and service coordinators on hundreds of issues to make people’s lives better. And then there are the two administrative assistants, Pat and Doris, who not only read my mind—they read my handwriting! I love ‘em.

Kent Stalder, Deputy Direct for the South District has been enormously supportive at a time when his own attention had to also be riveted on the budget. And this task would have been far more formidable without the help, good-will, and humor of Kim Crites, former Poplar Bluff Regional Center Director, and Steve Rahim, Superintendent of Southeast Missouri Residential Services.

I wanted you to know the names of these folks, so instrumental in the success of this “blending” because they will be most essential in the next phase—my transition OUT of DMH. Retirement September 1 will bring new challenges and opportunities. It’s been a great ride these thirty two years. You have taught me well. You and your sons and daughters and all the good folks I’ve met through the years have enriched my life immeasurably. And I want you to know that you are in great hands with every caring, hardworking, dedicated person employed by these facilities. They are some of the best folks in the world.

--Lynn Feeler, Director

RAC RAP

The new fiscal year has begun, and we are looking forward to working on activities that are somewhat new for us. Our grant focuses on three different areas. First is a youth initiative, designed to encourage organized youth groups (boy/girl scouts, 4-H, ect.) to participate in community building activities that will assist people with disabilities. What a tremendous opportunity this could be to earn a badge and learn about similarities and differences in people.

Our second focus is to obtain financial support from area Senate Bill 40 Board, to fund a stipend program for families who have children, under age 18, with developmental disabilities. Our final focus is to help adults who have disabilities and a

legal guardian, to better understand the voting process. Our goal is to help them through the process of gaining their right to vote. These are only a few of the activities we will be working on this year. There are always new opportunities for us to become involved with, both locally and statewide.

Our Council is also looking for new members. We need parent and/or consumer representatives from both Bollinger and New Madrid counties. We also need representatives from the Division of Family Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (special education) and Vocational Rehabilitation. Anyone interested in becoming a member should contact Lee Trankler at 1-800-497-4647.

There are going to be two back to school rallies coming up to help students get the supplies needed to begin school. While I know this is the last thing kids want to think about, it is quickly approaching. One of the rallies will be held, Friday, August 1, at the Salvation Army in Cape Girardeau. The second rally will be held Saturday, September 13, in Malden. It is the annual Don't Dis My Ability Back to School Youth Rally. The rally will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the First General Baptist Church in Malden, and is open to students with disabilities and their siblings. For more information about the Malden rally call Debbie Patterson at 573-888-0002. Have a great summer!

-- Lee Trankler, Region IX Council



Is Your Hut Burning?

Only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming.

Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions. But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky.

The worst had happened; everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!" he cried. Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him.

"How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going bad. But we shouldn't lose heart even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burning to the ground – it just may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God. - *From Tender Loving Calling website*

Visit Sikeston Regional Center's Website at: <http://www.dmh.missouri.gov/sikeston/index.htm>

Information on alternative treatments, resources, and products is provided in this newsletter as a service to families, and does not reflect the endorsement of the Sikeston Regional Center or the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Families should always consult with their doctors and therapists before trying any new product or treatment.

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Beyond Barriers committee: Cindy Brotherton, Lee Trankler, Candy Lane, Royce Kessel

Beyond Barriers editor: Pam Webb

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**Sikeston Regional Center
Beyond Barriers Team
112 Plaza Drive
PO Box 966
Sikeston, MO 63801**

